

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3747

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 8020

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MOPS, SREF, CASE, TH, FR, US, CB

SUBJECT: AMERICAN TALKS OF PHNOM PENH AFTER THE FALL

REF: BANGKOK 8013

SUMMARY

1. DOUGLAS SAPPER, AN AMERICAN CITIZEN WHO CAME OUT OF CAMBODIA WITH THE FIRST GROUP FROM THE FRENCH EMBASSY (REFTEL) HAS DESCRIBED PHNOM PENH'S LAST DAYS, FALL, LIFE IN THE OVER CROWDED FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND AND THE TRIP TO THE THAI BORDER. SAPPER, A COLORFUL BRONZE-STAR HOLDER FROM VIETNAM, COMMENTED ON WHAT HE KNEW OF KC ACTIVITY IN AND AROUND THE CITY, PAPULATION RESETTLEMENT POLICY AND COMMAND STRUCTURE. HE ALSO PROVIDED FOOTNOTES ON HIGH GKR FIGURES WHOM THE KC ORDERED OUT OF THE FRENCH COMPOUND. NYT'S SIDNEY SCHAMBERG CONFIRMED MUCH OF SAPPER'S INFORMATION IN A MAY 4 TELEPHONE CONVERSATION; HE ASKED THAT THE DETAILS BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL UNTIL ALL THE OTHERS ARE OUT. THIS INFORMATION SHOULD BE CLOSELY HELD UNTIL ALL FOREIGNERS LEAVE CAMBODIA.

END SUMMARY

2. IN A RAMBLING THREE-HOUR CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, DOUGLAS SAPPER, AN AMERICAN CITIZEN AND VICE-PRESIDENT FOR SECURITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRANSPORT, DESCRIBED THE PAST THREE WEEKS IN PHNOM PENH. HE GUESSED THAT THE CITY FELL APRIL 17 TO ABOUT 200 YOUNG KC FROM THE PHNOM PENH CITY ORGANIZATION. AMONG THE FIRST ACTS OF THE NEW CONQUERORS, SAPPER SAID, WAS THE ARMING OF PHNOM PENH STUDENTS FROM STOCKS OF ABANDONED OR SURRENDERED FANK WEAPONS. LATER IN THE WEEK HE BEGAN TO SEE THE TOUGHER-LOOKING VETERANS FROM THE BUSH.FREE-LANCE PHOTOGRAPHER ALAN ROCKOFF INITIALLY HAD THE RUN OF THE CITY AND TRAVELED ON THE HOOD OF A KC JEEP. ROCKOFF TOLD SAPPER THAT HIS GROUP OF KC RAN INTO A BAND OF KC TROOPS WHO HAD ENTERED PHNOM PENH FRO THE SOUTH; A HEATED DISCUSSION ENSUED AFTERWHICH ROCKOFF'S KC HOSTS SUGGESTED HE GO BACK TO THE PHNOM HOTEL

SAPPER CONCLUDED THAT THIS AND SIMILAR INCIDENTS MEANT THAT THE KC DID NOT HAVE COMPLETE COORDINATION AMONG THE UNITS WHO ENTERED TOWN HE ALSO NOTED THAT FIRING CONTINUED FOR A WEEK TO TEN DAYS AFTER THE CITY FELL W- WELL AFTER HE ESTIMATED THAT ALL THE FANK POCKETS HAD BEEN WIPE UP. SAPPER SAW BOTH LOOTING BY KC TROOPS AND A FEW KC FORCES DRUNK ON STOLEN LIQUOR. SOME FOREIGNERS LOST MONEY, CAMERAS OR ESPECIALLY WRISTWATCHES TO WEAPON-BRANDISHING SOLDIERS.

2-A. BOTH SAPPER AND SCHANBERG SAID THAT THEIR OVERALL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE KHMER ROUGE ARE SERIOUS, DISCIPLINED AND KNOW WHAT THEY WANT FOR CAMBODIA. "THEY ONLY SAY IT ONCE," SAPPER OBSERVED." AND YOU'D BETTER GET IT THEN BECAUSE THEY AREN'T GOING TO REPEAT THEMSELVES." THE PHNOM HOTEL INTERNATIONAL ZONE LASTED UNTIL LATE AFTERNOON OF THE 17TH WHEN AN OFFICER BACKED UP BY B-40-CARRING TROOPS PUSHED ASIDE RED CROSS OFFICIALS' PROTESTS AND GAVE PEOPLE AT THE HOTEL HALF AN HOUR TO EVACUATE THE THE GROUNDS. AS AN ASIDE SAPPER SAID THAT BEFORE THE FALL, HE AND CORRESPONDENTS TOOK THE LARGE AMERICAN FLAG OUT OF THE AP OFFICE AT THE HOTEL AND BURNED IT SAO THAT IT WOULD NOT FALL INTO KC HANDS. ONE JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT FILMED THE BURING AND APPARENTLY SLANTED HIS REPORT TO GIVE THE EVENT A LEFTIST CAST.

3. MOST PEOPLE FROM THE HOTEL AND MANY OTHERS SOUGHT REFUGE IN THE NEARBY FRENCH EMBASSY COMPOUND. FRENCH CONSUL JEAN DYRAC, WHO WAS LEFT IN CHARGE AFTER THE FRENCH EVACUATED THEIR DIPLOMATIC STAFF, REFUSED ENTRY TO KHMER MILITARY OFFICERS BUT WAS HELPLESS TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM POURING IN OVER THE WALLS. EVENTUALLY SOME 1,200 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PEOPLE GATHERED IN THE COMPOUND. SAPPER SAW FOUR GKR GENERALS DRIVE UP TO THE COMPOUND AND POUND ON THE GATE WHILE THEIR BODYGUARDS STOOD WITH HANDS ON THEIR GUNS WATCHING KC TROOPS MOVE BY TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE CITY. DYRAC REFUSED TO TALK TO THE FOUR WHO EVENTUALLY SHRUGGED THEIR SHOULDERS, GOT INTO THEIR VEHICLES AND DROVV AWAY. SAPPER PRAISED DYRAC FOR DOING ALL IN HIS POWER TO HELP REFUGEES, BOTH SAPPER AND SCHANBERG SAID ECOLE FRANCAISE DE L'EXTREME ORIENT OFFICIAL BIZOT WAS MAGNIFICENT. BIZOR HAD TAUGHT ONE OF THE KC

CHARGED WITH THE FRENCH EMBASSY GROUP AND WAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO LEAVE THE COMPOUND. HE WAS ALSO INSTRUMENTAL IN THE SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO SMUGGLE THE WIVES OF AMCIT'S OST AND ROBINET ONTO THE CONVOY.

NOTE: EXDIS CAPTION DELETED AND DOWNGRADED TO LOU PER BANGKOK 8461 AND MR. CAMPBELL S/S-O

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 NSC-05 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ITF-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3748

C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 BANGKOK 8020

LIMDIS

E.O. 1652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MOPS, SREF, CASE, TH, FR, US, CB

SUBJECT: AMERICAN TALKS OF PHNOM PENH AFTER THE FALL

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4. DYRAC WON THE FIRST BATTLE TO MAINTAIN FRENCH SOVENEIGNTY OVER THE COMPOUND AS HE INSISTED THAT THE GROUNDS WERE FRENCH SOIL BY INTERNATIONAL LAW AND OBSERVED THAT PARIS HAD RECOGNIZED THE GRUNK. HE LOST THE WAR, HOWEVER, WHEN THE KC RETURNED THE NEXT DAY AND STATED THAT ACCORDING TO THEIR THEORISTS A REVOLUTIONARY SITUATION WAS NOT SUBJECT TO INTERNATIONAL LAW AND,.9439;34, THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAD NOT RECOGNIZED THE VARIOUS CONVENTIONS MR. DYRAC HAD CITED, THE KC LATER REMOVED THE EMBASSY TRANSMITTER.

5. LIFE IN THE COMPOUND WAS DIFFICULT DUE TO OVERCROWDING; BUT, KC DID NOT PHYSICALLY MISTREAT OR EVEN SEARCH ANYONE. FOOD (MAINLY RICE) WAS AVAILABLE ALTHOUGH SAPPER SAID HE LOST 15 POUNDS DURING THE THREE WEEKS. KC DEMANDS TO HAVE KHMER NATIONALS RETURNED TO

THEM CAUSED ANGUISH AND HEARTBREAK AS MEN WERE SEPARATED FROM THEIR COMMON-LAW WIVES. SOME OLDER FRENCHMEN LEFT THE COMPOUND WITH THEIR VIETNAMESE WIVES. ONE KHMER WAS FORCED TO LEAVE HIS BELGIAN WIFE AND CHILDREN APRIL 20. THE KC SAID THEY WOULD TURN ALL THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE OVER TO THE PRG. OTHER GIRLS WERE SAVED WHEN SINGLE FRENCHMEN AGREED TO MARRY THEM. PYRAC IMMEDIATELY PROVIDED PAPERS OF FRENCH CITIZENSHIP. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CONFIDENTIAL

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UNG BUN HOR LEFT THE COMPOUND ESCORTED BY KC GUARDS. SAPPER SAID HE LEFT A SUITCASE CONTAINING \$50,000 IN FRENCH HANDS. SIRIK MATAK, WHEN HE SAW HE MUST LEAVE THE COMPOUND, WALKED TO THE GATE AND TOLD THE KC, "I AM READY TO ANSWER FOR MY CRIMES," WHILE CONSUL DYRAC WATCHED WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES. CONSIDERABLE TENSION EXISTED IN THE COMPOUND ESPECIALLY BETWEEN THE FRENCH RUBBER PLANTERS AND JOURNALISTS. TEMPER SOMETIMES FLARED AND BOTH SAPPER AND SCHANBERG NOTED A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS WHICH DID NOT MAKE THEM PROUD TO BE WESTERNERS.

7. ACCORDING TO SAPPER AND SCHANBERG, GKR OFFICIALS KNOWN TO BE IN KC HANDS INCLUDE: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER SISOWATH SIRIK MATAK, PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT UNG BUN HOR, MINISTER OF INFORMATION THONG LIM HUONG, PHNOM PENH SPECIAL MILITARY REGION COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL CHHIM CHHUON, PARATROOP BRIGADE COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL SREY YAR AND RESIGNED BRIGADIER GENERAL LON NON (PRESIDENT LON NOL'S YOUNGER BROTHER). NEITHER SAPPER NOR SCHANBERG COULD CONFIRM THAT EXECUTIONS OCCURRED ALTHOUGH BOTH HEARD OF THEM. SCHANBERG HIMSELF HAD A NARROW ESCAPE IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH HE CONCLUDED MEANT THAT THE KHMER HELD WITH HIM WERE KILLED.

8. KC OFFICIALS REMAINED NAMELESS. ALL ORDERS TO THE COMPOUND CARRIED ONLY THE TITLE, "COMMANDANT DE LA VILLE DE PHNOM PENH." SAPPER SAID ONE OFFICIAL WAS KNOWN AS "VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS." WHILE IN THE COMPOUND HE SAW TWO JET AIRCRAFT PAINTED WHITE WITH A RED BAR ON THE TAIL MAKING AN APPROACH TO POCHENTONG AIRPORT. THE PLANES STAYED ON THE GROUND TWO DAYS. SUBSEQUENT RUMOR CLAIMED THE PLANES CAME FROM HANOI, CARRYING OFFICIALS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

9. UNDER CLOSE QUESTIONING SAPPER SAID HE IS CERTAIN THAT THE KC CARRIED OUT THE EVACUATION OF ALL OF PHNOM PENH. PEOPLE STREAMED BY THE EMBASSY COMPOUND FOR OVER A WEEK, SOME ON STRETCHERS WITH FRIENDS OR RELATIVES CARRYING INTRAVENOUS FEEDING BOTTLES ALONG SIDE. KOMPONG CHHNANG, PURSAT AND BATTAMBANG WERE ALSO DESERTED AS WERE NUMEROUS SMALL VILLAGES WHICH THE CONVOY PASSED THROUGH ON BACK ROADS FROM PHNOM PENH UNTIL THEY EVENTUALLY JOINED ROUTE 5 NEAR KOMPONG CHHNANG. SAPPER'S UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE KC ARE FORCING MASSIVE POPULATION MOVEMENTS, LEAVING A PART OF THE POPULATION OF A VILLAGE AT EACH NEW POINT ON THE MARCH. HE SAID

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THE CONVOY PASSED THROUGH ONE VILLAGE WHICH HAD ONLY ONE FAMILY IN
IN RESIDENCE,PERHAPS THE NUCLEUS OF A NEW VILLAGE UNIT.

10. THE CONVOY TRIP TO THE BORDER INCREASED THE ANXIETIES AND
TENSIONS THAT HAD MARKED LIFE IN THE COMPOUND. THE GROUP WAS NOT
SURE WHETHER THEY WERE BEING EVACUATED OR LED OFF TO EXECUTION.
NEWSMEN, TO PROTECT THOSE WHO STAYED FOR A FOLLOWING CONVOY
PROMISED TO EMBARGO REPORTING UNTIL ALL FOREIGNERS WERE OUT.
THEY AGREED THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MAJOR AGENCIES AND DAILIES
SHOULD LEAVE ON THE FIRST CONVOY BECAUSE THEY COULD BETTER ENFORCE
THE EMBARGO. AS THE TRUCKS LOADED, 20 PEOPLE PER TRUCK, BIZOT
COUNTED OFF THE NUMBERS IN THE AMERICAN TRUCK, SKIPPING OVER MRS OST
AND MRS ROBINET, WHO HID UNDER SEATS. INITIALLY AMERICANS AND
RUSSIANS WERE IN THE SAME TRUCK. AT ONE POINT, THE SEVEN
RUSSIANS, WHO WERE WELL-PROVIDED WITH CAVIAR, PATE AND VODKA
WHICH THEY REFUSED TO SHARE, THREATENED TO TURN IN THE STOWAWAYS
UNLESS THE AMERICANS AGREED TO GIVE THEM SOME OF THE ISSUED RICE,
SAPPER THEN CONFRONTED TASS BUREAU CHIEF KOSSINSKE, WHOSE ABILITY
TO SPEAK ENGLISH WAS UNMASKED BY HIS INCAUTIOUS RESUME OF A BBC
BROADCAST. THE CONFRONTATION APPARENTLY CLEARED THE AIR AND
KOSSINSKE LATER GAVE SAPPER A BOTTLE OF VODKA.

11. SAPPER SAID THAT HE KNEW OF ONLY ONE DEATH ON THE JOURNEY, A
BABY WHO DIED NEAR KOMPONG CHHNANG AFTER SEVERAL HOURS EXPOSED TO A
DRIVING RAIN WHILE AWAITING THE KC DECISION ON WHERE TO QUARTER
THEM. LOCAL RESIDENTS AND TROOPS SHOWED ACTIVE HOSTILITY TO
AMERICANS AT ONLY ONE POINT ON THE TRIP. NEAR PURSAT LOCAL TROOPS
STOPPED THE FIRST VEHICLE AND SAID THEY WERE LOOKING FOR AMERICANS.
THE TRUCK LEADER REPLIED THAT THE CONVOY CONSISTED ONLY OF FRENCHMEN.
AT ANOTHER VILLAGE A KC GUARD ASKED SAPPER NOT TO SPEAK ENGLISH
SAYING THAT THE LOCAL RESIDENTS WERE ANTI-AMERICAN. SAPPER FINALLY
OBSERVED THAT THROUGHOUT THE KC TREATED ALL FOREIGNERS, OF WHATEVER
POLITICAL CAST ALIKE AND JUST EXACTLY AS THEY TREAT THEMSELVES.

12. THE FOREGOING INFORMATION MUST BE VERY CLOSELY HELD UNTIL
THOSE REMAINING OT THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN PHNOM PENH HAVE BEEN
EVACUATED.
MASTERS

NOTE BY OC/T: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED PER MR. JOHNSON, S/S-O
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